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## **Fela and His Wives: The Import of a Postcolonial Masculinity**

**By Derek Stanovsky**

### **ABSTRACT**

This paper explores the possibility that the production and consumption of Fela as a radical, third-world cultural and political figure is coupled with his presentation as radically polygynous and misogynist in ways that allow him to be fit into the existing discourses of race and gender in the West by both mainstream and left audiences. It suggests that Fela's fame in the West is not in spite of his polygyny and misogyny, but at least in part because of them. These elements allow him to be easily assimilated into the pre-existing script of Western expectations for Black African men, and additionally provides an implicit contrast that enables progressive (male) Western audiences to perceive themselves as both non-sexist and non-racist. It begins by examining the thoroughly postcolonial context out of which Fela emerges and into which he is received. Then, drawing on recent work by Judith Butler on gender as performative citation and iteration, it discusses the implications of this theory for views of race and masculinity in postcolonial contexts and apply it to the case of Fela and his wives. The aim is to illuminate both the cultural politics surrounding Fela's death, as well as explore the importance of Butler's work for postcolonial theory.

### **ARTICLE**

1. On August 2, 1997 the great Nigerian musician, Fela Anikulapo-Kuti, died of heart failure due to complications from AIDS in his home city of Lagos, Nigeria. One of a relatively small group of African musicians to achieve some measure of international fame and success, particularly in Europe and the United States, his death was noted in the Western press by newspapers and magazines ranging from The New York Times and Time magazine to Rolling Stone and Spin. In each of these cases--along with the mention of his musical accomplishments, his radical politics, and his frequent

imprisonment by the Nigerian government--comes mention of his twenty-seven wives and his habit of performing dressed only in bikini briefs.[1] In obituaries never more than a few column-inches, why is this information about his wives and his dress so ubiquitous? What makes these aspects of Fela's life worthy of wide-spread attention in announcements which sometimes do not exceed one-hundred words? In these hundred words, why is there room to mention twenty-seven wives and bikini briefs in the life of an individual whose musical career and legacy spanned decades and continents? In short, how is the masculinity of this postcolonial cultural icon packaged for consumption in the West and why?[2]

2. This paper explores the possibility that the production and consumption of Fela as a radical, third-world cultural and political figure is coupled with his presentation as radically polygynous and misogynist in ways that allow him to be fit into the existing discourses of race and gender in the West by both mainstream and left audiences. I will suggest that Fela's fame in the West is not in spite of his polygyny and misogyny, but at least in part because of them. These elements allow him to be easily assimilated into the pre-existing script of Western expectations for Black African men, and additionally provides an implicit contrast that enables progressive (male) Western audiences to perceive themselves as both non-sexist and non-racist. I will begin by examining the thoroughly postcolonial context out of which Fela emerges and into which he is received. Then, drawing on recent work by Judith Butler on gender as performative citation and iteration, I will discuss the implications of this theory for views of race and masculinity in postcolonial contexts and apply it to the case of Fela and his wives. My aim is to illuminate both the cultural politics surrounding Fela's death, as well as explore the importance of Butler's work for postcolonial theory.

Musical, Cultural and Political Fusions:  
The Life and Times of Fela Kuti



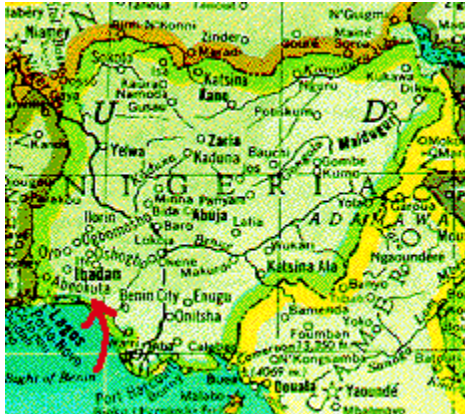
3. Fela Anikulapo-Kuti was born Olufela Oludotun Olusegun Ransome-Kuti in 1938 in Abeokuta, a Yoruba town in Western Nigeria, to the Right Reverend Israel Oludotun Ransome-Kuti, an Anglican priest, and his wife Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti, a prominent activist in women's and nationalist causes.[3] Educated in Great Britain, as were his brothers, Fela studied classical music in London while his brothers studied medicine. In London, Fela discovered American jazz and the music of Charlie Parker, John Coltrane

and Miles Davis, and his earliest Nigerian band was a jazz band. In 1969, Fela traveled to the United States and credits this trip with his own radicalization through exposure to the politics of Malcolm X and the Black Panthers. In an interview, Fela recounts:

It's crazy; in the States people think the black-power movement drew inspiration from Africa. All these Americans come over here looking for awareness. They don't realize they're the ones who've got it over there. Why, we were even ashamed to go around in national dress until we saw pictures of blacks wearing dashikis on 125th Street. (Herszenhorn)

Along with a newly militant political consciousness, Fela also returned to Nigeria with new musical influences from artists such as Otis Redding and James Brown.

4. Not long after this, Fela and his mother Africanized their family name, substituting Anikulapo, a Yoruba name meaning "one who carries death in a pouch," for Ransome. It was also during this time that Fela formed his influential forty-piece band Africa 70, later renamed Egypt 80, and began forging his distinctive fusion of West African highlife, jazz, funk and traditional African tribal musics which he dubbed "Afro-Beat," a label he later distanced himself from, preferring instead to refer to his work simply as "African music" (Stewart 121). Every bit as distinctive as the sound of his large band, with their hour-long songs featuring intricate percussion and horn arrangements, were Fela's lyrics. Uncompromisingly radical, Fela's songs were political attacks aimed at a Nigerian government and a world order that systematically exploited and oppressed Africans. With song titles such as "Sorrow, Tears and Blood," "Colonial Mentality," "I.T.T." (International Thief Thief) and "C.B.B." (Confusion Break Bones), Fela's songs were intended as political weapons. They were certainly treated as such by the Nigerian government, which banned his music on government radio stations and harassed, beat and imprisoned Fela on a number of occasions. The most brutal incident occurred in 1977 when hundreds of soldiers surrounded and overran his communal home, burned it to the ground, injured dozens of supporters and residents, beat Fela himself to unconsciousness, broke his hands, and threw his seventy-seven year old mother from a window, causing her injuries from which she later died.



5. It was this attack that cemented Fela's revolutionary political commitments. It was also after this attack that he married the twenty-seven women, dancers in his band, in a traditional tribal ceremony, an act with nationalist overtones in Nigeria and an affirmation of tribal culture, contexts which are difficult for Western audiences to appreciate. [4] By 1986, after his release from two years in prison, he divorced these women. None were forced to leave their home, though some had already moved on during his time in prison. The fact of his mass divorce is seldom mentioned in his obituaries. However, his polygyny is frequently cited, and cited as if it remained a fact.

6. The fact of his polygyny is also often used as supporting evidence for a pervasive misogyny, as if polygyny were the same thing as misogyny, or as if the tribal practice of polygyny were the source of all other misogyny. It is true that Fela's views on women were far from progressive. The sexual politics of the lyrics in his songs "Lady" and "Mattress" are as reactionary as the titles suggest, and in interviews Fela remained unapologetic for his views on women: "To call me a sexist . . . for me it's still not a negative name. If I'm a sexist, it's a gift. Not everybody can fuck two women every day. So if I can fuck two women every day and they [critics] don't like it, I'm sorry for them. I just like it" (Stewart 119-20). Given such statements, it is not the fact of Fela's misogyny I wish to contest, but the depiction of its source.

7. The linking of Fela's polygyny and his misogyny is extremely problematic. In the West, such a link perpetuates the images of Africa used to justify and legitimate colonial and neocolonial rule: Africans as culturally backwards, in need of Western guidance and enlightenment in managing even basic tasks such as family life. It also feeds the Western stereotypes of Black masculinity as dangerously hyper-sexual, and provides an imagined foundation for these stereotypes in African tribal culture and the institution of polygyny. [5] It suggests that all African men are misogynists (or at least potentially polygynists) on the basis of the example set by a single Nigerian pop-star. Such a generalization is clearly unwarranted, yet the implication remains. As Chandra Mohanty and others have argued, homogenizing practices such as polygyny and labeling them

as universally misogynist is a mistake. Universalized in this way, such institutions are effectively "denied any cultural and historical specificity, and contradictions and potentially subversive aspects are totally ruled out" (Mohanty 66). Thus, Yoruba polygyny becomes implicitly assimilated to every other culture which practices any form of polygyny, and all are judged as oppressive to women by an assumed first-world, Western standard of monogamy. It also denies the possibilities for opposition and resistance these practices may enable in certain circumstances. For instance, Fela's public performance of polygyny took place after the attack by Nigerian soldiers. Part of the meaning of this action under these circumstances was an assertion of a Yoruba identity in opposition to the predominantly Christian Nigerian government and as a form of resistance to the process of development and Westernization being imposed on Nigerians at the expense of indigenous tribal customs and practices. In Lagos, many perceived this ceremony as aimed at criticizing the hypocrisy of some "prominent Nigerians who posed as modern, monogamous men but openly kept numerous mistresses by whom they had children" (Howe 132).

8. To assert a simple connection between this strategically enacted polygyny and Fela's reactionary sexual politics is thus a suspect move at best. Such a move depends on the construction of an authentic, native masculinity which is essentially misogynist in nature. This masculinity is then deployed to explain, on the one hand, how an otherwise progressive and radical political and cultural figure could slip into such regressive and conservative views on women. On the other hand, it shores up a Western self-image as the source of all enlightened and progressive politics, especially with regard to women. This situation might once again fall under the heading Gayatri Spivak has described as "White men saving brown women from brown men" (297). Here the brown women are being saved from the polygyny of a brown man by the now emancipatory notion of Western monogamy. [6] In fact, such an inscription of Fela's masculinity into an essentialized notion of native misogyny fits poorly with the rest of his biography and even conflicts with it at several points.

9. Consider again the outlines of Fela's life sketched above. To re-create Fela as the image of "authentic" native masculinity requires a great deal of creative license. Fela, from birth, was enmeshed in the hybrid culture created by British colonialism, decolonization and neocolonialism that has shaped and reshaped Africa in the twentieth century. Fela's family belonged to the native elite in Nigeria, his father being an Anglican priest. What occupation could more clearly mark the British colonial influence than ordination in the Church of England? It was certainly this elite status that secured Fela his education, eventually sending him to London and Trinity College of Music where he studied trumpet and played jazz in clubs on the weekends. This life does not easily fit with Western expectations of an authentic native upbringing, just as polygyny does not seem to mesh with the images associated with being the son of an Anglican clergyman.

10. Further complications emerge if one considers Fela's mother, Funmilayo, in this context. [7] Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti was a leader in the struggle for women's rights in Nigeria and played an active and visible role in nationalist causes. A founder and leader of the Abeokuta Women's Union and the Nigerian Women's Union, in 1948 she helped organize the women of Abeokuta in a successful revolt against a tax on women. Friend to Ghana's Kwame Nkrumah and winner of the Lenin Peace Prize, by the time Nigeria became independent in 1960 she was perhaps the best known woman nationalist in the country. This biography too is difficult to reconcile with a story which attempts to envision a son's misogyny as the direct result of regressive tribal influences. Here, Fela's mother is a strong, outspoken political figure active in women's causes, not the sort of figure one expects to meet if the assumption of a pervasive culture of native misogyny is accurate.

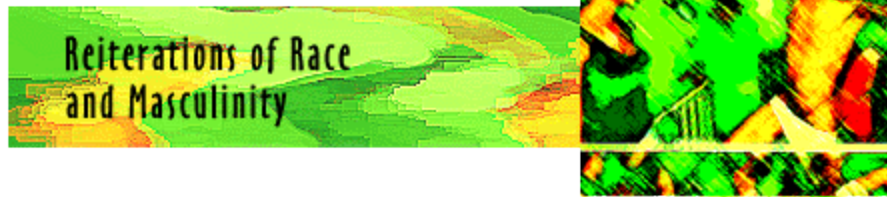
11. Given his mother's overtly feminist politics, it is tempting to look for outside sources to explain Fela's attitudes towards women. One might, for example, look to his connections with the Black Panthers, a group not known for their progressive sexual politics. Fela's travel to the United States in the late sixties is often identified, both by himself and others, as an important radicalizing event in his life. The emerging black-power movement in the United States evidently resonated strongly with Fela's own anti-colonial views and strengthened his pan-Africanist populist commitments. This story provides his progressive racial politics with a first-world pedigree, leaving his regressive sexual politics to be explained by the residues of tribal culture. But why should everything good and progressive have a first-world origin, and everything bad and regressive be blamed on an underdeveloped African culture? This approach is especially problematic given the progressive nature of the gender politics practiced by Fela's mother. If a group such as the Black Panthers were influential for Fela's racial politics, it seems unnecessary to posit a purely African source for his regressive sexual politics. One could argue that Fela's views on women were very much in line with other left figures of the time, and if he drew his inspiration from these figures for his politics of race, his sexual politics could also be influenced in this same way. The argument here is not that the Black Panthers are responsible for Fela's bad attitudes towards women, only that it is unnecessary to posit a purely African source for those attitudes. Even this story will not bear close scrutiny, since Fela's introduction to the Black Panthers was through a woman member, Sandra Smith, with whom he had a relationship at the time. It is clear he took her political views seriously since he adopted many of them as his own. Given this more complicated background, it seems unlikely that one either can, or should, identify any single source, whether African or American, for Fela's conflicted views on women.

12. Ultimately, it is difficult to claim the title of native authenticity even for Fela's music. Just as Fela's family background and schooling were characterized by the fusion and

hybridization of cultures brought about forcefully by colonization, his music also bears the marks of that history. Even if there were such a thing as "authentic" African music, it would be hard to argue that Fela's music should be categorized this way. Classically trained in London, steeped in American jazz and funk, if Fela is to bear the title of an authentic African musician, it must be on the basis of an expanded notion of what counts as authentically African. The lyrics to his songs are in English, the language of the colonizers. This fact alone should be enough to cast doubt on this imagined authenticity. However, English is also one of the reasons for Fela's success across Nigeria, across Africa and around the world. His songs are in a language made common by colonization, but global colonization also makes possible global resistance. Without English lyrics, it is doubtful his music would have had the same impact or influence. Sometimes Fela himself described his music in terms of the Western classical tradition in which he was schooled. "[Y]ou cannot say Fela is writing one song. No! Fela is writing a song with five movements. . . . It's like a symphony but in the African sense" (Stewart 117). What is a symphony in the African sense? And what sense does it make to claim this African symphony to be authentically African? However, if capturing an imagined, lost African purity is not the goal, then perhaps Fela is a very good choice as a representative of African music. His music is a product of Africa's colonial and postcolonial history and as such represents the present realities of Africa. What Fela lacks in purity of native authenticity, he more than makes up for in richness of postcolonial fusion.

13. Although Fela himself tended to identify his music as "African music," such a label carries with it different meanings when it comes from Fela, a political activist in Lagos, than when it comes from Time magazine. For Fela, the identity of "African" has a use in his pan-African politics for building solidarity across national boundaries and across linguistic and cultural barriers in an effort to build an international political movement. In Time magazine, the epithet of "African" serves more to homogenize and obscure the real differences among Africans from the gaze of Western eyes, and creates an imagined, almost mythic, space called "Africa" which acts as a repository for a host of Western fears and desires. In one case the goal is to overcome differences; in the other it is to deny the existence of those differences.

14. In general, any reference to an authentic "African" or even an authentic "Nigerian" identity is suspect if what is meant by this is a pure, originary identity free from any taint of outside influence. Such an identity is certainly not possible now, and perhaps never was. This does not mean that there are no such things as either Africans or Nigerians, only that those identities are not pure, fixed and authentic, but are always changing as the historical situations change. Thus, Fela is indeed both an African and a Nigerian cultural figure; he is so not because of any essential link to an idealized African past, but because of his ties to a lived African present.



15. In the discussion above, the postcolonial context of Fela's life and work is stressed in an effort to problematize his assimilation to an imagined African authenticity. However, there is another element to the image of Fela portrayed in the West in his obituaries and elsewhere also in need of similar problematizing: the image of his masculinity and of his sexuality in general. At the same time as mention of his twenty-seven wives draws him closer to the confines of an imagined tribal identity, it also inscribes him within the norms of compulsory heterosexuality as well as sets him apart within those norms along lines drawn by race. It is at this point that the work of Judith Butler provides insight into the cultural complexities which weld these images together. As Butler writes, "It seems crucial to resist the model of power that would set up racism and homophobia and misogyny as parallel or analogical relations" (Bodies 18). That is, it is important not to construe the portrayal of Fela's race and the portrayal of his masculinity as the result of two different and disconnected systems of power, but instead to stress the ways in which each is necessary to the constitution of the other and how this entire interlocking system of race and sex is necessary for the emergence of the subject at all. It is this mutual articulation of race by sex and sex by race and the subject by all of these that I will discuss in this section. Although Butler, well known for her work in gender studies and queer theory, is not usually looked to as a source for theoretical insights in postcolonial studies, her writings have extended to the intersections of sex and gender with race. [8] Given the already hybrid nature of the topic of postcolonial masculinities, Butler's work is usefully situated to help examine gendered subjects occupying a wide variety of vexed cultural terrains, such as those of postcolonial masculinity. My aim will be to show the way portrayals of Fela provide both an example of the type of situation Butler is concerned with as well as implicit support for her conclusions.

16. The text of the brief "Milestones" obituary in Time magazine reads in its entirety:

**DIED. FELA ANIKUPALO-KUTI** [sic], 58, confrontational father of Afro-Beat; after suffering from AIDS; in Lagos. Flamboyant and unapologetic--he married 27 women in one mass ceremony--Fela liked to strut about the stage clad only in briefs. He wielded his saxophone like a weapon, directing it against the Nigerian



government in songs like V.I.P. (Vagabonds in Power). His commitment involved more than just attitude: he was frequently arrested and in 1984 was imprisoned.

At every point in the text where sexual imagery occurs, associations with race can be adduced and vice versa. Some of these racial and sexual meanings have already been discussed above such as the overdetermined reference to AIDS, his twenty-seven wives, and his briefs. Others include his description as the "father" of Afro-Beat and his wielding of a (phallic) saxophone "like a weapon." Both of these continue the chain of imagery, so consistently found in accounts of Fela, that carries traces of both the savage native and of an unbridled sexuality that has "strut" onto the world stage. However, the sexual and racial rhetoric cannot be cleanly separated one from the other. They tend to occur together, one phrase invoking both sexual and racial overtones simultaneously. This points to something of the mutuality described by Butler "in which these vectors of power require and deploy each other for the purpose of their own articulation" (Bodies 18).

17. The postcolonial context of Fela's life and death highlights the co-dependence of the rhetoric of race and sex. This is because both contexts must remain clearly delineated in order for a postcolonial masculinity such as Fela's to take shape in Western discourse. This context also makes clear the ways in which postcolonial masculinities are produced/regulated by citations and iterations, as Butler terms them, of pre-existing cultural norms that surround the categories of both race and sex. These iterations, in addition to satisfying/enacting the norms of compulsory heterosexuality which underlie and make possible both masculine and feminine identities, also must reiterate and satisfy/enact the Western scripts of racial privilege. In fact, according to Butler, it is only through enacting and reiterating these already existing scripts that the subject can come to constitute itself as a subject at all.

18. All of this implies that the subject named Fela Kuti could not have occupied his cultural niche in the West as a radical, third-world cultural figure without occupying it through the iteration of scripts already bearing the marks of Western racism and sexism. As was shown in the preceding section, there is no necessary connection between Fela's African identity and his misogyny. However, when viewed from the vantage point of what might be necessary to successfully import Fela for consumption in the West, then it begins to seem both necessary, and even predictable, that events in his life be linked in ways that fit Western expectations. Thus, his masculinity, his politics and his music are all cast in terms of repetitions of cultural norms that secure his sought-after native authenticity while simultaneously rendering them safe for Western consumption. This safety is insured through the staging of his masculinity in terms familiar to Western audiences, as politically radical and dangerously sexual, but fatally flawed by backwards tribal views on the inferiority of women. His politics are radical, but no more so than the 1960s Berkeley politics on which they are patterned. His music is African, though

accessible to Western audiences with an ear for Coltrane and James Brown. The unfamiliar is rewritten in terms of the familiar and then is once again packaged as new and exotic. The argument here is not that Fela himself is derivative of Western culture, but rather that Western culture can receive him only as derivative. What is truly unfamiliar remains invisible. Here again, one must ask the question, "Can the subaltern speak?" and once again the answer appears to be "No" (Spivak 308). Nor can that subaltern voice necessarily be recovered. The postcolonial context cannot be evaded by an act of will. Perhaps the best that can be hoped for is an analysis of the mechanisms which produce its silence. As Spivak explains, "It is the slippage from rendering visible the mechanisms to rendering vocal the individual . . . that is consistently troublesome" (285).

19. An additional side-effect of this constitution and reception of Fela through repetitions of Western discourse is the self-image it helps make possible for Western audiences. Western audiences are able to confirm their view of themselves as both non-racist and non-sexist through their consumption of Fela's music. Their lack of racism is demonstrated by their status as Fela fans along with the implicit belief that racism and the enjoyment of African music are incompatible. At the same time, the audience can remain critical of Fela's polygyny and misogyny and thus reassure themselves of their own progressive first-world sexual politics as compared with those of Fela. This is done while consuming a stage show replete with female dancers exuding a sexual intensity which the Spice Girls can never hope to match, and all accomplished without reference to the pervasive Western racism and sexism which help set the stage.

20. So far, only the repressive aspects of these reiterations of race and sex have been discussed. However, this is only one aspect of Butler's theory. Even though cultural intelligibility requires the positioning of a subject within the terms of its own discourse through the repetition of those terms, Butler also writes:

That this reiteration is necessary is a sign that materialization is never quite complete, that bodies never quite comply with the norms by which their materialization is impelled. Indeed, it is the instabilities, the possibilities for rematerialization, opened up by this process that mark one domain in which the force of the regulatory law can be turned against itself to spawn rearticulations that call into question the hegemonic force of that very regulatory law. (Bodies 2)

In other words, it is the fact that the identity positioned as Fela Kuti does not fit perfectly into the terms of Western discourse and creates dissonance within that discourse that opens the possibility of contesting the terms of representation. For Butler, the very requirement for reiteration testifies to this fact. If there were an easy, close fit between the subject and the terms in which the subject is articulated, then continual reiteration

would not be necessary. Repetition is required only where instability exists and where the subject comes into conflict with the very discourse through which it is constituted as a subject. Thus, Fela must be continually recreated as the misogynist native precisely because he continually threatens to exceed those boundaries. In his music, in his lyrics, in his public persona, in his life, and even in his death, the iterations of the pre-existing scripts of race and sex are recombined and recirculated in ways that also work to destabilize the boundaries and legitimacy of these representations.

21. It is through the exploitation of these instabilities that Butler finds application for her work in queer theory and politics. In this case, the pejorative identity of "queer" has been substantially rehabilitated as a site for progressive action and resistance. This has been accomplished largely through the citation and reiteration of "queer" identities in new cultural contexts so as to take advantage of the dissonances surrounding them. Butler writes: "The public assertion of 'queerness' enacts performativity as citationality for the purposes of resignifying the abjection of homosexuality into defiance and legitimacy" (Bodies 21). It is this progressive potential for change which Butler seeks to emphasize, along with the fact that this change is enacted through existing cultural discourses. Change does not require an impossible escape from the dominant discourse, but instead is brought about from within that discourse. Similarly, the racist and sexist images pervading representations of Fela do not preclude the possibility of their redeployment in new contexts for progressive ends.

22. It is this potential for positive change and the formulation of strategies to help bring about this change that Butler's theory offers to understandings of postcolonial subjectivities in general, and postcolonial masculinities in particular. There are certainly damaging and disparaging portrayals of third-world masculine identities in the West. These portrayals cannot be easily avoided since they are also the mechanisms which constitute and make visible these postcolonial subjects. Confined to repeating the terms of their own marginalization through the reiteration of Western notions of race and sex, the subjects of these portrayals may see little hope of successfully disrupting these discourses. However, Butler notes: "The task will be to consider this threat and disruption not as a permanent contestation of social norms condemned to the pathos of perpetual failure, but rather as a critical resource in the struggle to rearticulate the very terms of symbolic legitimacy and intelligibility" (Bodies 3). The dissonances and incongruities surrounding the cultural reception of a figure as challenging in his contradictions as Fela Kuti may be looked to as a source for methods of contesting the always tentative hold exercised by the dominant culture on these images and meanings. Perhaps in the not too distant future, one may find a postcolonial masculinity being articulated in the service of a radical third-world feminism, complete with polygyny, as a challenge to the implicit imperialism of many existing Western feminisms. This possibility seems no more unlikely than the recent transformations "queer" identities

have undergone. If such a thing happens, Fela will deserve some of the credit for preparing and troubling the ground on which future iterations of postcolonial masculinities will take place.

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## Notes

1. See Herszenhorn, "Milestones," Goldman and Gehr. One notable exception is *American Visions* ("Fela Felled," October 1997: 11), an African-American cultural magazine, which makes no mention of these lurid details in their obituary. This only serves to highlight the very different role such a periodical plays in racial politics in the United States than *The New York Times* or *Time* magazine.
2. There is certainly also much to be said about Western representations of postcolonial femininities. For instance, in the case of Fela's wives, they are almost always referred to as an anonymous group, not as individuals, and even then basic facts, such as the health of these women who were all married to a man who died of AIDS, is never mentioned. However, since the focus of this essay is on representations of postcolonial masculinities, such an analysis cannot be pursued here in the detail it deserves. For more on postcoloniality and the representations of and by women, see Lewis's and Donaldson's separate works.
3. Biographical information in this section is drawn from Adeyanju, Howe, Johnson-Odim and Mba, Moore, Stewart, as well as from the obituaries cited above.
4. For more on the cultural meanings of Yoruba polygyny, see Matory, pp. 94 ff. A very different view can be found in Oyêwùmí, pp. 51ff.
5. This image also finds implicit support in the report of his cause of death by AIDS, a disease popularly linked with promiscuous sexual behavior and often treated as both a sign of, and a punishment for, such promiscuity. An additional racist connotation of AIDS can be found in the often repeated view that AIDS originated in Africa, possibly even as a consequence of this imagined promiscuity.
6. As Oyêwùmí writes, "The history of monogamous marriage in the West and feminist articulations of how oppressive to women and children this institution has been do not reveal monogamy as a system that inherently promotes a wife's interest" (61).
7. For more information, see the excellent recent biography by Johnson-Odim and Mba.

8. For Butler's discussions of race and postcoloniality see especially, "Endangered / Endangering: Schematic Racism and White Paranoia," where she offers a reading of Fanon's "The Fact of Blackness" in the context of the spectacle of the Rodney King videotape, as well as "Phantasmatic Identification and the Assumption of Sex," "Gender is Burning: Questions of Appropriation and Subversion," and "Critically Queer," all of which are collected in her book, *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex."* In particular, see "Phantasmatic Identification" for some suggestive comments on the politics of sexual identity in postcolonial contexts, pp. 111 ff.

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